

The voice of Kalimpong



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Big City Blues

Drugs or Education

The exams are over and the results for most have been released. It is now **crunch time for the parents** – a time to make decisions with regards to the future of their children. **Karan Shah** writes that its not all rosy down in the metros and if guardians are not careful their child may come back with one extra baggage.... **that of drugs!!!!**

One trend in the Hills is that after the completion of schooling most parents who can afford it, dream of sending their children to the metros for the shaping of their careers. But little do they realize that many a times their wards come back home after three-four years in the big cities with little or no technical knowledge which would have helped shape their futures. In fact many come back carrying back one extra baggage – that of, ‘substance dependency’ (in simple terms meaning- the child comes back as a drug addict).

It is a fact that many many innocent and simple youths from the Hills have gone to the big cities across the country and rather than coming back with proper knowledge of the field they had gone to master, have come back as slaves to substance abuse.

Twenty-two year old Rajesh Chettri departed for Calcutta in the year 2002. He is back – after having completed his graduation – but with the burden of, ‘substances dependency’. “It the freedom factor that acts as a base for the transformation of a normal youth”, an uncertain Chettri who is still to decide upon his future says.

In a detailed study made by this correspondent many more accepted the fact that sending their wards to the metros for further education has a flip side too. ‘We become like a fish out of a pond in big cities. This can lead to two results, either we really become focused in our studies and end up with a bright future or we just lose it altogether and end up in parties and discos each night, many a time coming under the influence of drugs or other types of abuses.” says Suresh Rai (name changed) an undergraduate from a reputed college in Calcutta. Another Big city educated girl accepted that due to the cheapness

of drugs and joints in the big cities the Hill youths become easily entrapped into this evil. “It is much more easily available there”, she says. When asked about the reasons behind Hill youths being influenced so easily 21 year old Suresh stunned this writer when he said, “This is due to a subconscious rebellion or an aftershock after the upheaval during the agitation years. A generation senior to us has set no proper examples for their juniors. All they narrate are horrors of fights and stabs”.

Commenting over this trend, a senior member of the Narcotics Anonymous (NA) – a group helping in rehabilitation of drug addicts, says it is the way of the hill youths to, ‘stand apart’, and get noticed. “We have to deal very delicately with them”, he said.

Perhaps the only remedy is awareness and an initiative collectively. □

WHERE HAVE ALL THE
DRAINS GONE???
BY WG.CDR.PRAFULLRAO

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LUXMIDAS PRADHAN
BY LOKESH PRADHAN

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OF DGHC
BY VIMAL KHAWAS

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BY DR. S.B. WANGYEL

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BY SANDIP C. JAIN

EDITORIAL

Just the other day, two very interesting stories took me to the still **virgin hill slopes on which Lingsay village is cradled**. The stories of course were only a pretext- the main reason I travelled to Lingsay was simply because I wanted to go and see the area. The stories which had felicitated my travel to Lingsay will be printed in the forth coming issues of this magazine but what I am sharing with you here, although also about Lingsay, may be too astonishing for many to actually believe it. Lingsay, which is in the Kalimpong Sub Division, lies about 45 km to the northeast of the town. **The only motorable road approaching this isolated village is via Pedong and Rehnok in Sikkim. Yes, one literally has to enter Sikkim and then come back into DGHC to reach Lingsay.** The approximately 15 km that one has to travel between Rehnok and Lingsay is through amazing scenery through paddy fields and lush green forests. Half of this 15km lies in Sikkim and other half of it in DGHC. One half of the road is so bad that it can hardly be classified as a motorable road - it is more akin to a stairways on which a four-wheel driven vehicle can barely manage to huff & puff and stay alive- while the other half of road is as smooth as any hills road can possible be. **The almost amazing and unbelievable thing about the above is that the bone jarring portion of the road is in Sikkim while the smooth roads are in the DGHC.** One would bet it would have been the other way round but the fact is that the **road on the DGHC side is 200 times better than on the Sikkim side.**

What this piece actually wants to say is that even though the grass always seems greener on the other side of a fence, the fact is that the grass on our side, at times, too could be better groomed, more lush and is any day more useful!!!

Propagators and supporters of the weird "Darjeeling - Sikkim Merger" theory should take note!!!.

Dear Mr. Editor,

The article on JAMGON KONGTRUL Eye centre by Miss. Prerna Suzi published in the last issue of the Himalayan Times was very interesting and informative. A female neighbour of mine had successfully been operated upon at the centre at a very nominal cost. On her suggestion I too went to the Eye centre for check up due to the fact that for some time past I was having a burning sensation in my eyes while reading or writing.

I found that the Eye centre was located in a very clean surrounding away from the jarring din and bustle of the town. The construction for the new wing of the centre was going on. There was a reception counter inside where a receptionist registered my name in a very politely. There was no rush but the patients had to stand in a queue. It was a first come, first serve kind of service. I was thoroughly checked by a young male and a young lady doctor. There was no hurry during the process. I was then sent to the nurses who administered eye drops in my eyes with cordial manners. The prescription was for eye glasses and for the use of eye drops for sometime. They found nothing serious in my eyes.

Now I feel quite O.K. with a pair of new glasses which I use while reading and writing. The doctor nurses and others connected with centre are mostly young people. All patients are treated equally with smiling faces. The clinic is not a money minting institution like so many nursing homes of the district but a charitable institution which has been established with the noble cause of serving the suffering humanity.

Yours sincerely

M.M Gurung

East Main Road, Kalimpong

DO YOU HAVE ANY THING THAT
YOU WANT TO SHARE WITH THE REST OF

KALIMPONG ???

HAVE YOUR SAY AT **YOUR
PAGE**

legal aid awareness camps

Our Correspondent

The judiciary of Kalimpong seems to be firm in its project of generating maximum legal awareness among the citizens of this place and granting them proper access to legal information.

Officials, of the sub-divisional legal services' committee (SLRC), a board which conducts legal awareness camps, said that the citizens are largely ignorant about their legal claims and rights.

To promote general legal awareness, the committee will, therefore, be holding three legal -aid awareness camps within the month of June.

The camps were held in Kalimpong Block-I, Kalimpong Block-II (Algarah) and Kalimpong Block-III (Gorubathan) within June, in the respective block development offices.

"We will be educating the citizens about all kinds of legal tribulations", chairman of the sub-divisional legal services

committee from Kalimpong, Mr. PG Dutta said.

The organization of such camps, a mandatory directive, under the Legal Services Authorities Act of 1987 have not been a regular feature supposedly due to widespread legal ignorance.

"Proper response, on part of the people, has been also lacking. Only four such camps were held last year," Mr Dutta said.

"The committee basically provides free legal services to people having an annual income of less than Rs 50,000, the members of the scheduled castes and tribes, women, the child delinquents, the handicapped citizens, and the victims of natural calamities", Mr Dutta said.

According to official records, 65 people, falling under either of these categories, opted for legal aid via the SLRC between January 2003 and March 2005.

"All of them were well compensated", Mr Dutta said.

Seniors of the committee have also invited the cooperation of the local NGO's for holding of such camps.

The SLRC grants free legal aid in all civil, criminal, revenue and administrative cases in any court of law including the Supreme Court.

The masses will also be informed about the 'Lok Adalat', which settles minor litigations and which has been operative here since the month of May. □

Seminar on Lepcha Heritage Anup Moktan

FUTURE OF KALIMPONG



MISS NEHARIKA GUPTA
DOB 25.03.2000

If you want your child's photograph to feature here, all you have to do is to send us a recent photograph of your child along with the Date Of Birth.

In a bid to create interest of the youths in the rich Lepcha culture and heritage, a three day Youth Seminar was organized under the aegis of the Lepcha Association at the premises of the Lepcha Boys Hostel, Bong Busty, recently. The seminar was attended by participants from Darjeeling, Bijanbari, Sitong, and Kalimpong. "Our main aim is to arouse the interest on the rich Lepcha culture and language among the youth", said Dorjee T. Lepcha, Secretary of the youth seminar organizing committee. "We also want to reduce the gap between the Buddhist and Christian Lepcha", he added.

Apart from the regular speeches, the seminar also had group discussions where the participants discussed about the problems plaguing the tribe and how to revive the vanishing heritage. Incidentally, it was the first such, seminar and according to members of the organising committee they have decided to make it an annual affair with the venues changing each year. "In is a good initiative to educate the youth about our rich culture and language. We are proud of our heritage," said Odit Lepcha, a student. □



D ABBAW ALAS O F KALIMPONG

—By Sandip C. Jain

They may not have been invited to the royal wedding in London nor is their work treated as a case study like that of the now world famous Dabbawalas of Mumbai but one thing is certain – the anticipation and excitement with which school kids in Kalimpong these days await lunch served by our local dabbawalas, is probably fit for another case study. Midday meals in school are fun again with school children now getting a variety of food all though the

week courtesy “**the dabbawalas of Kalimpong** “. Actually they are not exactly like the dabbawalas of Mumbai but rather caterers who cook and serve mid day meals to school students in the various schools of Kalimpong.

Two such caterers are “**Aahar**” and “**Tiffin King**”, both of which provide lunch service to school children of Kalimpong. **Aahar** was started in 2004 and **Tiffin King** started service this year. The school students are treated each day to a variety of delicious like Veg & Non Veg Biryanies, Pizzas, Hamburgers, Chicken & Veg Rolls, Stuffed Parathas,

Noodles, Fruits and Juice. Both Tiffin King and Aahar provide service in almost all school of Kalimpong on a monthly payment basis. Says Dhendup Bhutia a partner in “Tiffin King”, “We started off with seven students carrying the food in a motor bike. Now we have more than 300 member students and we ferry the food in several cars each going to a different school.”

“The best part is that both Aahar & Tiffin King offer their service at a very nominal rate”, says a school teacher who avails of the service provided by Aahar. Both the caterers charge about Rs.300/- to Rs.350/- which means just about Rs.15/- to Rs.17/- per day, which for a full meal is nominal by any standards. Says Mrs. Meera Rai, the mother of a student availing this service, “I am a teacher myself and have to leave home at almost the same time as my two school going children. I had to previously really hurry early in the mornings, getting my children ready, cleaning up the house, getting ready myself and then cooking lunch for all of us. Now my schedule in the morning is much more relaxed than previously as lunch now is taken care of by Aahar.”

“Every my children are happy and no longer crib about lunch” she adds. □

cartoon



DID I NOT TELL YOU TO BUY A BRANDED INDIAN MIXER & GRINDER RATHER THAN THIS CHEAP "KHASHA" PRODUCT???

Bird watching prospects in Kalimpong

By Karan Shah

Fast growing as one of the major tourists destinations in this region – the subdivision of Kalimpong is now attracting several many groups each year for Bird Watching.

Kalimpong known for a wide range of bird species – many endangered – rare birds like, ‘Satyrtragopan’, and, ‘Wardstrogon’, are found mainly in Lava- Neora Valley National Park, Samthar and other places in the sub division. Besides the Mahananda Wildlife Sanctuary, Singalila (Darjeeling) and Kanchanjunga National Park (Sikkim) are also considered as nests for hundreds of other rare species.

Talking about the prospects of bird watching here Mr Peter Lobo a field guide associated with a local tour operators, Adventure Gurudongma, confirmed that the wide range of species found here are attracting tourists from all over the world to visit Kalimpong. “There are almost 450 species of birds found alone in this sub-division and more than 650 species found in the whole of the Himalayan range”, Mr Lobo also an ornithologist said.

According to him there has been an almost hundred percent increase in inflow of tourist in Kalimpong for birding in comparison to last year. “We had almost sixty watchers this year, a double in comparison to last year”, Mr Lobo said.

North Bengal is know to possess a high potential for birding mainly due to the fact that the jungle begins right from the plains stretching to high altitudes.

The best seasons for birding are from the month of February to April. It is in this season; the Passerines – the largest order perching songbirds – are mostly seen. “The period from October to December is also favourable for bird watching as this is time when birds migrate to lower altitude places”, he said.


Writing in the book, ‘Important birds of India’, compiled and edited by M Zafar-ul Islam and Asad K Rahmani, Mr Lobo has mentioned, ‘seven globally threatened species and two almost extinct species are found at this region’. “It is one of the best bird watching places in India as rarities such as Rusty-belled Shortwig Brachypteryx hyperythra are found here. Thanks to its great altitudinal variation from 183m to 3,200m of Lava-Neora Valley”, Mr Lobo said adding, “The Teesta range is also good place for watchers”.

Mr Lobo is also set to present North Bengal as a site for birding in the British Bird Fair – one of the largest bird fairs – to be held at England this August. □

Parliamentary Delegation on Inspection Visit

—————Anup Moktan

The Parliamentary subcommittee on official language had arrived on an inspection visit in the Second week of June. The committee consisted of a number of MPs and was headed by Dr. Laxmi Narayan Pandey. The purpose of the committee was to evaluate the implementation of our national language, Hindi in various government offices of the district. According to officials, such inspections are being conducted all over the country. The Committee had conducted a study on three departments in the region, namely- Directorate of field publicity, Indian Agricultural Research Institute, and Plant Quarantine office. As per guidelines laid down by the centre, the target to be achieved by Darjeeling district, which is in the ‘C- region’ (areas where use Of Hindi is restricted compared to regional languages), is 55%, However, Dr. K.B. Pun, SENIOR Scientist, IARI, confessed that their department has only reached about 22% “We definitely need to improve”, he said




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Kaffer children in Awareness Campaign

By Anup Moktan

The World Environment Day was observed everywhere on 5th June. The children of Kaffer Gaon Primary School, a little known school in a well known place, had a message for the people of Kaffer aka Lolaygaon- that they should protect the popular tourist spot from environmental degradation. In a function attended by hotel owners, social workers and local people, the children conveyed their concern on the growing pollution and its effect on the environment. Cultural dances, songs and a quiz competition on environmental were organized. Rome Sherpa of class IV, in her poem 'Binti Hajurlai', asked the people to stop using polyethylene bags and to practically undertake afforestation. Thousand of visitors visit Kaffer during the tourist season and it is but obvious that the place had become littered with plastics and dirt strewn everywhere. "Tourists come to Lolaygaon

because of the clean environment so we should be committed to protect the same," said Bhuan Khanal, a teacher and the brain behind the show. Kaffer, like Kalimpong, is also not free from the problems of water-shortage in the tourist season. One reason being the burgeoning population of hotels and resorts. The other reason, according to Khanal, is the unrestrained cutting of pine trees. Former councilor Tshering Sherpa, who was the chief Guest, lauded the advantages of afforestation. We must collectively work to protect the environment ,' he said. He also mooted the proposal of starting a "Smriti Bun". P.B. Gurung, Panchayat Pradhan, said "we should not only be engaged in preaching but should also try to practically enforce our ideas for a better tomorrow."

"Our main aim was to create consciousness regarding the environment and I believe that we have succeeded in this endeavour of ours," said Bhuan Khanal.

THE NEWLY RENOVATED TRIKON PARK HAS ONCE AGAIN BECOME A HOME FOR THE VAGABONDS OF KALIMPONG WHILE TOURISTS SIT ON THE FOOT-PATHS OF MAIN ROAD..... SO MUCH FOR ROTARY CLUB'S TIME, EFFORT, MONEY AND ENERGY!!!!!!



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Playing Ping-Pong with Kalimpong's environment

This article was previously published in the Gobar Times, New Delhi



These are the environmental problems that the citizens of Kalimpong have to deal with. The people blame the government. The government, in turn, blames the people.

'Water! Water everywhere, but not a drop

to drink'. This saying really suits the town of Kalimpong. There are enough water sources. But does anyone want to tap them? Through reliable sources we learnt that the government had sanctioned Rs.47 crore for the Neora Valley Drinking Water Project to alleviate the problem. But seven years later, what has happened? The answer is simple. The mismanagement and bad planning on the part of the government has failed to quench the people's thirst. Another fact is that despite the fact that there are dharas near our homes where there is more than enough water, why do we prefer direct pipelines and take the share of those who don't even have water to cook? Is it not being selfish?

Then there is the problem of waste. We the citizens are blaming the municipality and the municipality, in turn, is blaming us. One of the staff members of the municipality complained about the lack of cooperation

from the people who do not use the dustbins. He informed us proudly that all his staff members dispose waste properly. How can we believe this when there is a heap of garbage lying at the side of the same office? Who is actually responsible for the waste? Can't this problem be solved by working together and understanding each other's responsibility?

There is the problem of vehicles also. Everyone expects the pleasure of having their own cars. But has anyone bothered to think about the consequences of such desires leading to uncontrolled traffic and pollution?

These problems are not only of Kalimpong town, but also of rest of India and indeed the whole world. Please help us to make this world a better place for you and for us and the entire human race.

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Scientist voice concerns over fall in productivity of large cardamom and oranges

Serious concerns regarding fall in the production and quality of large cardamom and oranges – the two major cash crops of this region – were voiced in a seminar held in the Indian Agriculture Research Institute in Kalimpong.

Addressing the centenary farmers days here at the research stations of the Indian Agricultural Research Institute (IARI) scientists from various stations stressed the need for gatherings and interactions to better the crop production in the area.

Senior scientist and officer-in-charge of IARI, Dr KB Pun maintained that there had been a huge fall in the total production of the both the above mentioned crops in the past decade. “Citrus Tristeza (a virus) and fungi related problems for citrus and large cardamom respectively have mainly hit the crops and have led to the decline in production”, Dr Pun informed.

As per data given by the officials of IARI there has been a fifty percent decrease in the production over the past decade. “However such interactions prove to be very fruitful both for the farmers and the research team and will lead to increase in productivity”, Dr Pun said.

After brief addresses by the scientists from WBCADC, Citrus Dieback Station, KVK, Regional Sericulture Research Station and from the Additional Director of Forest (Sikkim), a field visit and farmer scientist interaction was also held.

Senior scientist of the Citrus Dieback Station, Mr Kishore Thapa said efforts are on to revive the lost glory of the hills. “Certainly there is a serious need for a change from the traditional methods of farming to commercial ones. For example the exotic fruits, cut flowers are highly rated in the present day market in comparison to vegetables. “More importantly we have got the advantage of such conducive weather and research stations such as IARI which are well equipped with laboratories to fight diseases”, Officer-in-charge of the Comprehensive Area Development Corporation (CADC), Mr SS Mondol said.

Farmers from all the three hill sub-division and the neighboring state of Sikkim attended the conference.

“It rises at 6000 meters and flows down to 150 metres in less than 250 kilometers. So one can imagine the velocity of the river and the damage it could cause anytime in the near future”, Mr Chatterjee said.

The main topics discussed were a) the unique Teesta b) geological character c) basic river dynamics d) affects of dams and e) area of research ignored.

Accusing the NHPC of not analyzing the, ‘geomorphology’, of this region he said, “They have not done the survey in a detailed manner as NHPC is more of a commercial body”, he said.

“We are now dealing with the projects in a holistic manner by including families affected at the projects sites at Dixchu and Jangu (Sikkim) too. The peoples movement is what we have been aiming at”, secretary to Nespon (NGO) of Siliguri, Mr Soumitra Ghosh said.

Accordingly to members of Nepon the people have had no access to information as NHPC have suppressed all the facts. “The projects can be disastrous”, Mr Ghosh claimed.

“Dams are being initiated in the name of development. But have the locals been consulted or do they have enough knowledge in terms of submergence or the land acquired by the NHPC”, coordinator of a capital based, Delhi Forum, Mr Souparna Lahiri said.

He also alleged that the statutory works are not done by the NHPC. “They have been avoiding the actual facts. For example the public hearing for the projects at Dixchu was being conducted at Gangtok and for Kalijhora at Deorali”, Mr Lahiri added.

Rejecting accusations consultant (PR-NHPC of TLDP) Mr BK Parajuli speaking over the phone from New Delhi said, “How can the project be cleared if all the factors had not been taken into consideration. It has been cleared statutorily”.

Three-day workshop against NHPC

By Karan Shah

Expressing the need for unity among the families affected by projects on dams by NHPC on the river Teesta, organizers of the three-day, ‘People’s Workshop’, which was held in Kalimpong recently, voiced alleged loopholes on the part of the corporation.

Focusing mainly on projects over Teesta – both in West Bengal and Sikkim – former deputy director general of geological survey of India (GSI) Mr Debashish Chatterjee placed the need of educating the families, directly or indirectly affected by the projects.

Speaking at the technical session of the workshop Mr Chatterjee said, “Has the NHPC taken into consideration the geological features of the Teesta”.



Sixteen Years of DGHC and Development Paradigm in Darjeeling Hills

— Vimal Khawas

Introduction

The last two decades of the 20th century witnessed the creation and formation of three important Autonomous Development Councils (ADCs) within the Indian Federation. They are Darjeeling Gorkha (Autonomous) Hill Council (1988), Ladakh Autonomous Development Council (1995) and Bodo Autonomous Development Council (1993). It restructured and decentralized our conventional system of federation, which normally consists of the Union and the Federated Units (states).

Darjeeling Gorkha (Autonomous) Hill Council has been formed taking into account the factors like the geographical isolation, distinct regional identity and some special problems different from that of the mainstream West Bengal State. It is, to be more precise, the result of about a century (starting from 1907) long ethnic struggle to regain a measure of political autonomy from the West Bengal State. The premise on which it has been created lies in the fact that decentralization of power would give a boost to the developmental activities and meet the aspiration of the people in the region. In other words, the focal aim behind the creation of DGHC may be said to be the socio-economic and cultural advancement of the

local people within the established council.

Sixteen years down the line, since DGHC was formed in July 1988, it becomes pertinent to navigate and highlight the status of DGHC, its functional dynamics and various key development- planning issues characterizing DGHC. It, further, becomes important for us to assess the development paradigm followed by the DGHC in the last sixteen years in view of the fourth general election in the region and the associated political complexities that have been characterizing the area in recent times.

Status of Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council

Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council as a unit of development made especially for the socio economic advancement of the hill people of Darjeeling district has a structure of a federated unit within a larger federation. Its composition is to a large extent similar to that of the states within the Indian union. The state government of West Bengal acts as central federation. As far as the structure is concerned it has all the characters of a state. However, with regard to the powers and functions it is subject to the approval and ratification by the government in almost all the matters. The examination of its powers

and functions highlights its position not much ahead of the zilla parishad. Besides, there are important party political uncertainties and dependencies that compromise the power of the council.

Although as an agent of development it enjoys freedom to prepare development plans and budgets for the hill areas all the laws and by laws in this regard passed by the Council cannot be implemented unless approved by the government. It is also that they have to be drawn at par with the priorities and broad principals envisaged in national and state five year plans. Thus, the reality is that the centre or state can always reject or force reformulation of Councils priorities, plans and programmes. Funds still flow through the state government including the central fund. Often the late release of funds by the state makes it impossible for the council administration to carry out the programmes.

DGHC, moreover, has not been created under the statute of the parliament. It has been created under the state legislature possibly to prevent the uncontrollable agitation and violence in the Darjeeling hills. It is therefore a political creation rather than a Constitutional one. No part of the Indian Constitution was amended in this regard and hence the Indian Constitution does not talk of the

existence of DGHC in any part within the territory of India.

Functional Dynamics: Key Planning And Development Issues

The spatial division of the district into hills (DGHC) and plains (Siliguri sub-division) has negatively impacted the hill economy. Siliguri since history has been serving as an economic hub in the region and thus as a major trading and commercial centre it not only influences the hill economy of Darjeeling district but also plays an important role as a commercial linkage between Northeast India and mainland and between Nepal/Bhutan and India. Hence, excluding Siliguri away from the functional jurisdiction of DGHC has adversely impacted the long-term development process in the Darjeeling hill region.

DGHC in the last fifteen years has been unable to prepare integrated development plans for the hill areas. The development plans prepared so far over the years are Sectoral and hence lopsided in nature. Sectors to gain major emphasis so far include road construction, tourism and primary education. Sadly, all the attempts in this regard have been a massive failure. Unscientific and unplanned construction of roads in this ecologically fragile region has led to increased landslides and soil seep over the years. Development of strategic and eco-friendly tourism has been far from appreciation. Primary education

has suffered lot due to local party politics.

The presence of two administrative and planning units in Darjeeling has been creating more of confusions rather than scientific and efficient development in the region. Each unit assumes that it is superior with more power to the other thus pushing efficient planning and development to the back seat. Therefore, conflicts lack of cooperation, unnecessary interventions on each other's business and most importantly superiority complex between the district collectorate and DGHC are the forces that have been seriously hindering the advancement of this backward tract even today. The main sufferers in this situation are the development units below the district, i.e. Municipalities, Blocks and Villages that work under the direction and guidance of DGHC and district collectorate. In a way it is the general mass that are suffering, 'yet again'.

Darjeeling District – Planning Framework: Analysis

The executive powers with reference to primary, secondary and higher secondary education has been conferred in DGHC the powers related to secondary and higher secondary education still lies with the state government and thus DGHC has no say in this regard so far till date. This has led to appreciable conflicts between the state government and the council in recent times. The School Service Commission of West Bengal in this regard provides an appropriate example. DGHC in the last five to ten years has blocked all the appointments made by SSC in secondary and higher secondary institutions in the hill areas within its functional jurisdiction thus adversely impacting the education system in the region. Similarly, the other major conflict areas between the state and the DGHC include forest, land and transportation.

Major Conflict Areas Between West Bengal Government and DGHC

Land

Allotment, occupation or use or setting apart of land other than land under reserved forest with the approval of the government is vested with DGHC while activities with respect to land reforms and land acquisitions are with the state.

Forest

Management of protected forests and un-classed forests are with the executive power of DGHC while reserved forests are under the control of the forest department of the state.

Education

Executive powers with reference to the education till higher secondary level has been vested in DGHC as per the DGHC Act; however, activities with respect to secondary and higher education is still controlled by the state government.

Transportation

Transport and development of transport in the hill areas lies within the executive power of DGHC. The

regional transport authority is still under the control of district magistrate.

Lastly, there is no agreement locally on the direction and kind of development that is deemed appropriate for Darjeeling Hills and is controlled by a handful of so called self-centered elected representatives – a new political elites in the region. Hence, the much-hyped concept of local and community level participation and people empowerment are at the backseat. It should be remembered that DGHC was created in order to meet the demand of local community, for a stronger voice of the people in decision-making, planning and implementation of development objectives. DGHC has not been able to resolve these problems but rather exacerbated it. The villagers, farmers, and the weaker sections or to be more precise the general mass are largely kept away from the decision and thus the planning process and have no voice in the formal structure of the Council.

Conclusion

The above brief discussion leads us to the confusion and reasons the very existence of Autonomous Development Councils (ADCs). Some of the important queries that we would like to be clarified in this connection may be highlighted as below-

- Ø What is the political status of ADCs?
- Ø Are ADCs appropriate spatial planning units?
- Ø What is the planning and development status of ADC areas within the Indian Federation?
- Ø Are ADCs appropriate answers to the historic

problems of the people in the region?

- Ø And most importantly, who is being empowered here, on what basis and to what extent?

It is important to understand that mere institutional and legal empowerment of the local communities does not address in itself issues of social justice and inequality and certainly does not lead naturally or necessarily to better policies. At the same time we also need to know that devolution and decentralization are an indispensable component of any attempt to move towards social justice and sustainability. Hence, the challenge ahead is to re-conceptualize the very concept of community representation and the institutional arrangements that we often envision with reference to their relevance to the regions and the people therein so that inter regional as well as intra regional disparities are reduced and sustainable development is attained. In addition, apart from the development strategies on ethnic and linguistic lines in any regional plans scientific allocations of resources and the respective functions in this regard need also to be worked out. ■

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The original Liril girl Karen Lunel-Hishey

By Vimla Patil

This Article has been reproduced from the Internet



Early this year, Karen Lunel-Hishey went to Kalimpong in the Himalayan hills to celebrate Losar, the Tibetan new year, with her in-laws for the time. She is not a new bride, nor is this her first visit to Kalimpong. Scott, her son, is nine years old and she and husband Tashi Hishey have visited Kalimpong many times. Indeed, they were married there in Buddhist ceremony. But this year's celebration of Losar was the authentication of Karen's present lifestyle. A young girl who was a mini-darling of the catwalk in the 70s, a numero uno model for the Liril campaign, Karen now in her 40s, has become even more beautiful and full of life. With a rare spirit of adventure, she explores her new Tibetan family culture and enjoys every festival or family occasion with the Hishey in Kalimpong.

"Losar comes in February, near the Chinese new year," she says, "Tibetan Buddhists get up early, gather in the family temple and share Darshi – a sticky rice and raisin sweet and fermented tea with butter. We all wear Tibetan robes and are blessed by Kusho-las, the priests. Our festive lunch comprises gyacko or Mongolian steamboat with soup stacked with all kinds of meats. There is roast mutton, beef, chicken and a variety of vegetables. Then for dinner there are thukpah or noodles, momos or domsums and wonton or pace soup.

The Tibetan Buddhists have an elaborate altar with many deities – the Buddha, many goddesses, Hindu icons – included in the prayer. Every Tibetan home must have a prayer room. It is often the largest room in the house. Bhog is offered to the gods consisting of kwacha, which are like large sugary kalkals, khapse or large roti-like biscuits, fresh fruit, sprouted wheat and barley and bowls of tea, curd, liquor and milk. The family makes and drinks a warm sherry-like liquor called chhang, which is very potent. The new ear blessing or wish is expressed in the words: Tashi delek."

Tashi, meaning joy or blessing is also Karen's husband's name. a devout Buddhist, he works for Air-India and has a large family in Kalimpong, a hill station which nestles in a valley between Darjeeling and Gangtok. The language the Tibetans speak there is a dialect of Nepali. The main business in Kalimpong is schools, orchid gardens, fruit orchards and tourism.

Karen, who made major waves as the first Liril model to wear a swimsuit and dance under a cascade, and was a catwalk beauty in the 70s, met Tashi in 1980 when she was a hostess in Air-India. They were married in 1985 in Kaimpong. "The ceremony was held in our prayer room with many Kusholas teciting prayers and offering blessings in the Tibetan language which only Tashi's mother understands," says Karen, "In these hills, there are few flowers. So a Tibetan couple exchanges khadda or silk

scarves as garlands. The gods get khaddas too. When the ceremony was over, we received khaddas from our elders and friends. My in-laws accepted me totally and loved me instantly. I am a devout Catholic but this has made indifference at all. Tashi's paternal grandmother was a Hindu, so all religions combine in our home. My son Scott says Tibetan and Christian prayers, and knows both cultures. I also believe in all religions."

Karen's flying career with Air-India came to a halt when motherhood became more important. She stayed home to bring up Scott and do justice to motherhood. But a career was inevitable. To begin with, she became a Times FM disc jockey and anchored two programmes every week. That was fun but an airline career still held a magnetic attraction. When Scott was old enough, she chose to be the chief training executive for a private airline and now trains batches of cabin to serve passengers perfectly. Since this is ground job, she is with her son every day and keeps a lovely home in suburban Mumbai as a proud home-makes.

Karen looks the same after 20 years. Her figure is lithe, her eyes dance with excitement and her narrations are picturesque and full of life. Tashi and she are making a life together and bringing up Scott in a quaint Tibetan-Indian mix of culture and heritage. ■

Where have all the drains gone?

Some statistics/facts about Kalimpong subdivision....

- a) Average annual rainfall is 2500-3000mm ie approx 80-85 inches.
- b) Unprecedented and widespread deforestation has taken place in this area in the past 20 yrs.
- c) Also during this period we have witnessed an explosive increase in construction of buildings with scant regard to soil structure and almost no urban planning.
- d) Last but not least, Kalimpong is located in seismic zone IV

(Definition of **Zone IV**: This zone is second in severity to Zone V. This is referred here as High Damage Risk Zone.)



■ Wg. Cdr. Prafulla Rao

We happen to be in an area which receives some of the heaviest rainfall in the world. Come June each year, the South Western monsoon literally explodes over our heads dumping approx 7-8 feet of water per square inch; so picture this a lake as large as the subdivision with 8 feet of water...that's what the monsoon creates. Yes, the water does not stagnate but that's exactly where things go wrong...here are some related questions and answers...

a) Has any study been done on how to channelize the water from this huge lake so as to minimize the damage to our infrastructures and land forms.

a) Ans: No (most probably)

b) Have any major new drains been constructed to cater for vast new urban/built up areas which have come up in the last 20-25 yrs?

b) Ans: No. The drains we have today are very much those

which the British left us with half a century ago.

c) What is the condition of the existing drainage systems which are in place?

c) Ans: In many cases, they are defunct and where they are functioning, the condition of the drains is pathetic. To elaborate further, in Kalimpong town most storm water drains now conveniently serve as conduits for huge bundles of

domestic water pipelines which choke the drains. Then, of course there is the gigantic problem of plastic waste which clog up nearly all our jhoras and drains.

- d) Is there any organized/systematic effort to clean the drains before the monsoons?
- d) Ans: Periodic and regular cleaning of the drains is seldom undertaken.

So we have millions of tonnes of water gushing down these fragile mountains every which way it wants and the most obvious victim are the roads which it ploughs up more efficiently than a bulldozer. No wonder our roads look like what the Apollo astronauts saw on the moon!

Potholed roads may not kill, but what will is the fact that this colossal amount of rainfall now cascades down

virtually barren hillsides where once stood magnificent



forests. Thousands of acres of trees have disappeared in the last 20yrs or so and with them the ability of the land to withstand the monsoons without sliding.

And so... we taunt nature and ask for an encore of the 1968 disaster...

SPEECH OF SHRI GOPALKRISHNA GANDHI, THE GOVERNOR OF WEST BENGAL, AT THE FIRST CONVOCATION OF BENGAL ENGINEERING AND SCIENCE UNIVERSITY, SHIBPUR, HOWRAH, ON 16 FEBRUARY, 2005.

An important part of India is Himalayan, including the area comprising the state of West Bengal. The Himalaya are a mountain range which, for all its celebration in our legends and epics, is geologically young. Like everything young, it is unpredictable. The Himalaya are susceptible to the most devastating geo-hazards. I fear we have not realized this sufficiently. Today, if a quake at 8 on the Richter were to visit us, the great majority of the region would not only be mauled but, for days, could remain unreachable by rescue and relief teams. The roads going up may well get fissured and fragmented, landslide and building crashing down approach routes. I suggest that BESU and NBU do a joint study and make projections, on likely impact on the region of geohazards in terms of spread, extent, intensity of impact, reaction time, and recommend action.

Bye and sleep well... if you can..... ▣

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As regards the last para ie the seismicity of Kalimpong, I have only to quote a far more illustrious person viz H.E Gopalkrishna Gandhi, The Governor of West Bengal

Recalling KALIMPONG

—By Dr. S.B.Wangyel



Following is a part of the interview on St. Augustine's School with Rev. Father Ranger a year before he passed away. Old age had severely restricted his mobility and he lived in a simple but cozy one- roomed apartment where the school had installed a dish antenna and a color TV so that he could watch his favourite programme, BBC News. Father George was with us throughout the interview. Despite his old age the priest displayed a robust memory and clarity of thought and only on rare occasions drifted away from the topic.

Q. Were there any native students from Kalimpong studying at the SAS during the formative years of the school?

A. We had Chinese, we had Punjabis... I think they were from outside...not ...from Kalimpong.

Q. All Anglo-Indian schools commenced with the object of meeting the needs of the European and Anglo-Indian children...

A. There was only one English boy. His father was a soldier and he brought him ...Peter Shanproof, the only English boy.

Q. You also lived in Gorubathan. Were there schools there at that time?

A. Little primary schools. There was a Scottish Mission school. (Father George intervenes: 'Father, do you remember Tej Tuladhar?' Father Ranger collects: 'He was one of our students, a local student.' Father George: 'You mentioned that there were no local students ...Tej Tuladhar was there!' Father Ranger :That was later and he passed out in 52..)

Q. When the school commenced what kind of difficulties did you encounter?

A. You know here in Kalimpong we had Dr. Graham. He was very much against the Catholic Mission. It seems he had written about 30 letters to the

Government to keep the Catholic Missionaries out. So we were not around. We started in Pedong but the Sisters came and stayed where they are now. In the map it was marked out as a sanitarium. They came and they demanded they need (ed) a Chaplain. So Father Duoanel came and built a hut in their garden...not far from their church.

Q. So you were at the receiving end of the Government's heavy hands!

A. Oh yes. The Government was Protestant, Anglican or Presbyterian and all that. Very much against us. Surreptitiously on account of the Sisters, we start the school. The Sister gave a part of their land to the Mission as far as I can think. The Superior had to report any

building to be made and he said that I want a garage. when I was a parish priest we began to expand the garage...we added a bit at the back, made a veranda etc. The idea of having a tuberculosis hospital was stopped because they did not want tuberculosis near them. We could have had it but he stopped it.

Q. How did you travel to Kalimpong?

A. I came from Siliguri to Kalimpong in a bullock cart. It took three days. There used to be tigers and all the bullock-carts would be in a caravan with lights underneath and we would all go together. Mine was the first motorcycle in Kalimpong, 1936, and everybody would run along to have a look and touch it.

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Expression!!!

WALKING DOWN DEAD END STREET

By. W. B.

the one good thing
that came along
walking down dead end street

did'nt think she'd walk
down that road with me
she did.

the days passed by
so did the years
she was always there

when I laughed
she laughed
when I wept she did
she loved me she said
and nothing else mattered

thought it would go on forever
how wrong I was
what matters
has moved on
and nothing matters now

walking down dead end street.

N ever Gonna
let you down

BY RAHUL SINHA

I take a walk in the park when I feel down.
To see the nature bloom like a laughing
child.

I am looking for somewhere to belong,
Standing all alone; waiting for someone to
guide me.

I'm never gonna say I'm sorry
As I'm a down for everyone
I'm never gonna let you down
I'm always here like a sun.

I'm a loser that is a fact for sure;
I'm happy even if you don't want
To go for a walk tonight,
I'm not normal, I know it, but I don't care.

I'm always here like a sun, I'm always here,
Like a shadow I follow your steps,
Give me just a minute to shine with you,
I will make you be happy, make you laugh

M A Y A K O P H U L B A R I M A - K A L A - B U N G

By Sanjana Pradhan

Are we to blind? - This town we call home, is beautiful, it is vibrant, filled with a cultural emersion of people who are as individual as the mountains yet bonded by a fascination, a (sense of) belonging to a place we call Kalimpong.

Of the roads we have taken and after all the experiences and adventures we still find us wandering home, because lets face it this is where we belong.

A one horse town of caravans and wool traders no more but of an aspiring generation spawned by 100,000 years of human evolution. So where does that leave us in the broader picture of the world, backward! Out of touch from the rest of the world! Well are we? We are a generation into the Internet and that itself is the marvel of this millennium, we have the latest the world has to offer and by no means are we less of than the rest of the world, so if we are termed backward then tell them - what or who are they to question 100,000 years of human evolution. We are here because that is how fate has shaped us but destiny is ours to create. We are a proud people steeped into a history of valor, of bravery and of un selfish sacrifice but above all we are know for our hospitality and kindness which in itself is a virtue.

The comforts in our town are few and precious, and everything we do has a sentimental attachment so are we ready to sacrifice our principles and what precious little we hold dear. The roads don't meet any standards, the offices are slow and cumbersome, the bank is something to desire for! Having said that we do have an ATM and much appreciated. In spite of all this, here we call home. We have come to live and accept kalimpong as it. The fact that there are more cars and taxis here than anywhere else in the world - well sure feels like it! Is a nightmare, but still in spite of all this, we trod along hoping the future holds good prospects.

The potential of this town is huge, its time for all of us to break down the walls we have created around us, we must break free from trying to solve the problems of the world from our own living rooms. A western town we still are of street fighters and would be gangsters, who still threaten to remove six inches I mean where does that leave us. Ours is a society where the word family is the basic core, a society still governed by the principals of respect and dedication of every parent. So why are the younger generation still trying to find their bearing its time we moved on out of our small world, of being vagabonds, and Rastafarians and do something for our people and our town.

**Kalimpong Hamro
kalimpong ! We owe it to
ourselves not to be blind !**

jumble jumble

RUBKA

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MISUV

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DAMNIP

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HANGROT

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LONGHANTE

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(Hint: Peaks of the Eastern Himalayas)

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Complete the above Jumble and send in your entry with the coupon given below by the 12th July 2005 to win a free lunch for two at **Soods Garden Retreat, Kalimpong**. The correct answers for the jumble published in the last issue are **TRIBENI, PANDIM, MIDLAND, STANDARD, GREEHILL & DALIMGARDEN**

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Miss Riti Pradhan

8th Mile, Kalimpong

Please submit your entry in a plain sheet of paper alongwith this coupon. Please do not tear this page to submit your entry.

**jumble
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LAXMIDAS PRADHAN A BIOGRAPHIC

By - Lokesh C. Pradhan

Translated by Ms. Malika Pradhan

In the year 1846, Kathmandu witnessed the horrendous 'Kot Parva' massacre. Immediately after this incident, Laxmi Das Pradhan, son of Laxmi Narayan Pradhan, fled from Bhaktapur and entered a foreign land. At that time, Jung Bahadur Rana was the prime minister of Nepal. His fame and supremacy was widespread. All the citizens were afraid of his wrath. During his life time, King Rajendra Bikram Shah had handed over his power to his Queen Laxmi Devi Shah.

Laxmi Das Pradhan, in his native place, Bhaktapur, used to own a cloth-shop at Makkhan Tole, in Kathmandu. The Ranas used to buy cloths from his shop with the promise that they would pay him later. The amount due to him from the Ranas after a period of time rose to a considerably large one; it was then that he heard from his well-wishers that the Ranas were planning to kill him instead of paying him back his money. Fearing for his life and that of his family he thought it prudent to flee Kathmandu.

After leaving Kathmandu, he headed towards the eastern mountains. After crossing many foreign lands across hills, jungles, rivers, and streams, he reached Hanumanagar via Jaleshwar. For

sometime, he worked as a farmer to earn his livelihood. In a chance meeting with a sage, the Holy Man advised him, 'Go outside Nepal and you will be fortunate.' So Laxmi Das stopped working as a farmer and moved on and ultimately he reached Darjeeling.

Lacking finance and other resources he sold the sword which he had in his possession for Five Rupees. With this money he opened

a shop behind the (Gol Ghar) at the market-place. Along with edibles, he sold 'Gundurk' too. Slowly but steadily, the shop started running well. In order to run his family and seek refuge, he bought a plot of land at Singhanpur, Convent Road and also built a house. When he was fairly established there, he went to Kathmandu and paid for a settlement with the Ranas there. He then brought his family to Darjeeling. His younger brother Chandrabir Pradhan, too came along.



photo: Mr. Ranjeev Pradhan, Siliguri

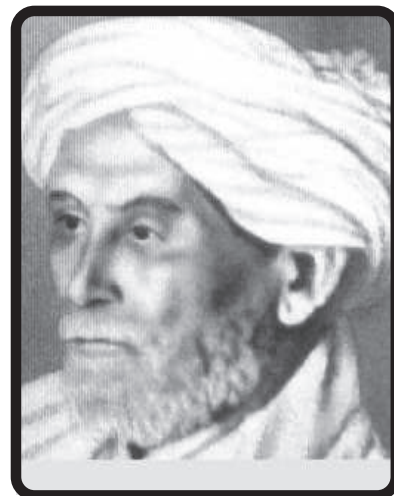
In 1835, the Britishers had taken over Darjeeling. The Kaji Clan of Sikkim used to visit Darjeeling frequently. The Chief Minister of Sikkim also used to visit the shop that Laxmi Das ran and used to buy things from there. Over the years, Laxmi Das Pradhan became very close to the Kajis. The then Maharaja of Sikkim Shree Pach Thotup Namgyal, seeing his sincerity and hard working nature invited him to Sikkim. He promised to give some land to Laxmi Das and told him to toil on it and be prosperous.

Laxmi Das Pradhan was in a dilemma. He wondered whether it was wise enough to leave his shop and go to Sikkim. After discussing the matter with his younger brother Chandra Bir, he left for Sikkim. At that time, there were two groups in Sikkim. One group favoured the Nepali people in Sikkim while the other protested their stay there.

Laxmi Das earned the favours of the then Political Offices of Sikkim, John C White. Many labourers were required to construct roads, railway lines, tea- estates, etc, in Darjeeling. Laxmi Das Pradhan also needed farmers and workers to work in his fields. He used to live in Turuk, South Sikkim. In 1876, the Raja of Sikkim gave Laxmi Das permission to open copper mines in Sikkim. Round and flat copper coins were made on which were inscribed 'Shree, Shree, Shree, Sikkim Government'- These coins were also used in some partsof the Terai Region of Nepal.

In 1888, when the British Government took firm hold over Sikkim, Laxmi Das Pradhan was nominated the first ever Nepali Commissions of Darjeeling Municipality. He was the non governmental visitors of Darjeeling Jail. In order to maintain his business at Darjeeling and Sikkim, he gave one-fourth of his land to Chandra Bir Pradhan, son of Maheshwar Pradhan and Jeetinan Singh Pradhan son of Bhanunarsingh Pradhan. Though Laxmi Das Pradhan was a man of dynamic personality, he possessed a calm nature. Even when he was in troubled, he was never disturbed.

A holy person by nature he used to believe in singing hymns and praying to God. He made remarkable developments in the areas which were under his control He made all round developments in his area. If anything is to be said about the Renaissance of Sikkim, Laxmi Das Pradhan's contribution towards it cannot go unnoticed. ▣



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nostalgia



Photograph courtesy Mr Narayan Gajmere of Kalimpong from his personal collection



THIS PHOTOGRAPH TAKEN IN THE SECOND QUARTER OF THE LAST CENTURY CAPTURES WOMEN ARTISTS WORKING WITH THE KALIMPONG HOME INDUSTRIES (KALIMPONG ARTS & CRAFT) POSING FOR THE CAMERAS.

ON THE CONTRIBUTORS

Mr. Vimal Khawas

is an executive member, Hill and Mountain forum, New Delhi and managing editor, The Himalayan.

Wg.Cdr. Prafulla Rao

Is the Secretary of the Kalimpong Consumers Forum and a prominent social worker of the town.

Mr. Lokesh C. Pradhan

Is a reputed Nepali language writer from the town who has written several many informative articles on varied topics.

Ms. Malika Pradhan

Is a direct decendent of Luxmi Das Pradhan and is currently settled outside the country.

Dr. Sonam B. Wangyel

Is a Jaigoan based doctor who is acknowledged as an authority on the history of this region.

Mr. Anup Moktan

Is a student of Kalimpong College who is also a correspondent with Himalayan Times.

Mr. Gautam Lama

Is a teacher in Benjamine's Garden School and is a cartoonist with a Siliguri based paper.

Mr. Karan Shah

Is a young career journalist reporting for a National daily from Kalimpong.

Mrs. Sanjana Pradhan

Is a corporate lawyer in England who was born and brought up in Kalimpong.

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CAKES



COLD DRINKS



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